
WELCOMES

We've all heard, many times, how important a first impression is. As military spouses, we know this to be the case. We've all been the new face in the group and know how difficult it is to repeatedly have to show "the real you." Just as important as an individual's first impression on a group, is the group's first impression of an individual. *Every* military spouse has a unique quality to offer a wardroom or support group. This being the case, we need to make newcomers feel welcome in our group so that they want to come back.

A Welcome Aboard is the group's first impression and will set the tone for the remainder of the tour. Keep this in mind when forming a Welcome Committee within your group.

Some tips for a memorable welcome:

Form a hospitality committee (like the Welcome Wagon), or elect a hospitality chairperson to gather and deliver:

- ☐ A Welcome Aboard Package from Fleet and Family Support Center
- ☐ A Welcome Card (Card stores carry great ones).
- ☐ A Basket of Goodies
- ☐ A Command Social Roster
- ☐ A Small Gift

Gifts might be: a small plant, Military or Command insignia pin, cross-stitched "welcome aboard" on a jar cover or in a frame, a small silver cup, mug or a barbecue apron (with command logo stitched on the bib), a recipe box or book with a photo and recipe from each spouse.

Keep in mind that gifts need not be expensive or of fine quality. The Dollar Store is a wonderful place to find small, tacky, fun gifts. If your command has a mascot, use it as a theme and find items that, although slightly tacky, are cherished always.

Please remember that you will not always be welcoming a new wife into your group. The Military is changing and more often we are welcoming husbands into our groups. Select small gifts that are geared toward men for your welcome aboard and make them feel as welcome as a wife; for they can become a valuable asset to your team.

SPOUSE GROUP ACTIVITIES

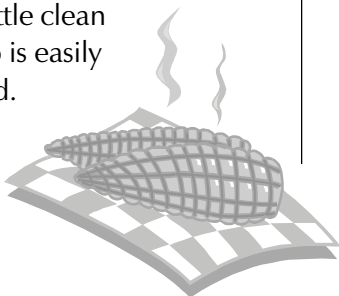
Unity within your group(s) is important, even when the command is not deployed. To throw a group together at the most stressful time of their lives, i.e. deployment, is not a good idea. Often times the group never warms up to each other. Starting communication before the command leaves is an essential component to successful support and wardroom spouse groups. Getting together with your group at least once a month under a relaxed environment is an easy way to achieve this. Try to stagger meeting times and days of the week so that working spouses have a greater opportunity of attending.

WARDROOM SPOUSE ACTIVITIES

These activities should be brief so as not to interfere with the time spent with families. They should contain a short business meeting, if necessary, followed by a social. An ice-breaking game is a good start if the group is new to each other.

Some ideas for get-togethers might include:

- ☐ Pot-Luck Dinners. A favorite with military spouses. Requires a little planning and little clean up, so is easily hosted.



- ☐ Planning a deployment. Mostly a business meeting with the objective being working out a deployment schedule of activities. Encourage each wife to volunteer to host a deployment get-together, to co-chair a committee with a support group spouse (such as homecoming or halfway night). Talk about fears or special needs that any of them may have. Have a Fleet and Family Support Center Representative give a presentation on Stress. This can be held over a coffee or dessert social.
- ☐ Fondue Party. Cheese or Chocolate no need for chairs, everyone can sit on the floor.
- ☐ Secret Pal. Make up a questionnaire for each spouse. Get information like: birthday, anniversary, favorite color, likes, dislikes, children's names, pets, collections, etc. Have each spouse draw a questionnaire from a pile to be a Secret Pal to that person. This really helps get some through deployment blues.
- ☐ Dinner Out. Go to a restaurant and be waited on.

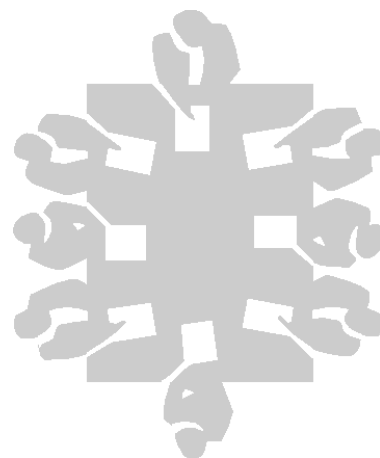
Most of the ideas from above can be done when a command is deployed as well. Just remember that it is imperative to keep communication lines open and use them effectively before the command departs so that the bugs are worked out before hand. Try to include the service member in as many activities as possible so they don't feel abandoned at home with the kids while you are out socializing (sound like a two-hour deployment?).

GET TOGETHERS

As transient as the military makes us, it is important to any group to make proper introductions and make group members feel at ease. For this reason, “ice-breakers” are a necessity. Ice-breaking games can be as simple as having everyone introduce themselves with a brief bio or as complex as a pre-arranged game. Whichever method you choose, don’t forget to add this to the meeting agenda whenever there is a new member present.

Some Ice-breaker games:

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|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Who Am I? Pin the name of a famous person on the back of each guest. Have them ask questions requiring yes or no answers of each of the other guests for a present time. At the end of the time limit, go around the room, starting with yourself and guess who you are.<input type="checkbox"/> Bridal Shower. Have each spouse bring a wedding picture with both the happy bride and groom in it, and a wrapped \$1 gift. Have each guest draw a number from a hat. Number one then selects a gift and opens it. Number two selects a gift, opens it and decides if she wants to keep it or exchange with number one. Continue through to the last number. Then pass around the wedding pictures and have the guests vote on “who has changed the most,” prettiest dress, goofiest hairstyle, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Baby Picture Exchange. Have each guest bring a baby picture of their spouse. Mount them on construction paper and assign each a number. Give each spouse a sheet of paper with corresponding numbers listed down the side. Have the guests fill in the names next to the number. Have a prize for the guest that guesses the most identities of the babies.<input type="checkbox"/> Panty-Hose Race. Pair two guests off. Give them each a pair of panty hose and tell them they have to put them on over their clothes and the one to do it first goes on to the next bracket in the single elimination tourney. As the two start, inform them that they will be blindfolded and wearing mittens. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Don’t Say I. Give each person three discs (pennies maybe). He/She is to move around, introduce him/herself to everyone and ask questions that might prompt the other person to use the word “I.” If anyone does he/she collects a disc from the “I” sayers. He/she with the most discs at the end of a preset time wins a small door prize. |
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A wrapped \$1 gift brought to each wardroom function can become a fun tradition and an imagination contest. Raffle the gift off and have the winner bring the gift for the next get-together.

Support Group Activities are for get-togethers for different reasons within your command; be it a Support Group, Wardroom Group, a few friends, all girls, girls and guys or whoever shows up.

Approach each section with imagination and creativity. The more of the individual personalities that are added to each idea, the more enjoyable and unforgettable each occasion will be. Let yourself and your group go – the more absorbed a lonely spouse is in creativity, the less vulnerable he/she will be. Good Luck!

SUPPORT GROUP ACTIVITIES

Support Group activities are mostly business when the command is in but it is nice to get together over dessert and coffee to plan a calendar of events for the up-coming six months or so. Make plans for children's parties, elections, select committees, etc. These things don't have to be done all at once but don't delay until you are rushed. Have guest speakers to speak to the group, such as investment counselors, home and/or personal safety experts, budget planners, or the Commanding Officer or Executive Officer. Most of these speakers can be found at the Fleet and Family Support Center or at on-base resources. Learn a craft, a new recipe (pot-luck). Secret Pals are good ways to create a sense of unity to keep out cliques. Building a unified support group before the command deploys is a must for good teamwork later down the road.

ADDITIONAL
IDEAS
.....
FOR GROUPS

THE COMMAND IS DEPLOYED

This adventure – the deployment to end all deployments-is your opportunity to rise to a challenge and conquer the odds. Hopefully the following activities will aid you along the way.

SPOUSE ACTIVITIES

Community Projects and Charity Work:

- ☐ Visit hospitals, local VA centers or Nursing homes. Bring baskets of goodies (cookies, chips, and nuts are good choices). This reflects well on the command's image and makes you feel really good.
- ☐ Prepare Thanksgiving Food Baskets. The base Chaplain Center usually organizes these and delivers them for you.
- ☐ Adopt a family. Become an angel and provide Christmas gifts and meals for an under privileged family. FFSC, Churches, or Navy-Marine Corps Relief will have information.
- ☐ Adopt a shelter or cause. Volunteer time, supplies, or talent. This way more than just money passes between your group and the needy.
- ☐ Food Shelters. Have everyone bring a canned food item to each meeting and periodically bring it to the local food bank.

CHARITIES
.....
IN MY AREA

FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR DEPLOYMENT CHECKLIST

Legal Considerations

- ☐ Do you have a will?
- ☐ Is page two of your service record up to date with the correct beneficiary listed?
- ☐ Is the correct beneficiary listed on your SGLI?
- ☐ Do you need to leave power of attorney with anyone?
- ☐ Do you need to leave a medical authorization with the person who is taking care of your dependent children?

Financial Planning

- ☐ Do you have a written monthly spending plan or budget for the deployment? (Get a Financial Planning Worksheet from your CFS to get started.)

Does the budget include amounts for:

- ☐ port visits
- ☐ long-distance phone calls
- ☐ gift/souvenir purchases
- ☐ savings for vacation after the deployment is over

Does the budget include amounts for possible income changes such as:

- ☐ sea pay
- ☐ Family Separation Allowance (FSA)
- ☐ rate changes while deployed
- ☐ reenlistment bonuses or any other special payments
- ☐ Do you have a savings plan to help you achieve your financial goals?
- ☐ Have you considered starting an IRA or other long-term investment programs to build your wealth?

Banking Decisions

- ☐ Is your pay set up the way you want? (DDS to correct account(s)? Split Pay? Any Allotments or automatic check drafts?)
- ☐ If married, do you both understand clearly how finances are to be handled during deployment?
- ☐ If married, have you considered establishing separate checking accounts?
- ☐ Have you considered joining a credit union?

Taxes

- ☐ If you plan to do your taxes while deployed, do you have all the records you will need?
- ☐ If married, do you or your spouse have a Power of Attorney or Form 2848 signed by both of you?

Bills, Bills, Bills!

- ☐ Who will be paying your bills while you are deployed?
- ☐ Are there any once-a-year expenses coming up while you are deployed? Who will pay them for you?
- ☐ How will you be making monthly payments to your creditors? Do they all have your correct address?
- ☐ If married, have you decided who will be using which credit cards during the deployment?
- ☐ Do you and your spouse both understand who will be paying which bills?
- ☐ If you're renting an apartment, who will be paying the rent for you?
- ☐ Will you have to pay utility bills while deployed? Who will pay them for you?
- ☐ Is your renter's/homeowner's insurance current?

Vehicles

- ☐ Do you have a safe place to store your vehicle and/or someone to take care of it for you?
- ☐ Are vehicle insurance, tags, and inspection stickers all current?
- ☐ Is all routine maintenance, i.e., oil/filter change, etc., current?
- ☐ Have you left the name of a trusted mechanic/repair garage with your family?

Emergency Plans

- ☐ Do you have at least one month's pay saved in case of financial emergency?
- ☐ Have you considered signing a pre-authorization form with Navy/Marine Corps Relief for your spouse?
- ☐ Does your spouse know how to access the TRICARE system for medical care, particularly when outside the local area?
- ☐ Does your family know your complete, official mailing address and social security number?
- ☐ Does your family know how to use Red Cross in case of an emergency?

See your Command Financial Specialist for more information!

ESTABLISHING GOALS FOR DEPLOYMENT

Clearly define what you hope to accomplish.

While it's important to dream, it's also important to be realistic. (You don't want to set yourself up for failure.) You may choose one goal or multiple goals in different areas, for example: a financial goal, a personal goal, and a goal to complete a project.

However many you decide to work toward, define each goal as clearly as possible. For example, "I want to save enough money to make a down payment on a car" might be too vague. Instead, try to narrow the goal down to its simplest term. For example, "I will save \$100 each month for a down payment until I have \$2000."

Setting goals to achieve during a deployment can make time pass more quickly, give you something definite to focus on, and provide a sense of accomplishment when you succeed. The following steps can help in setting and achieving your own personal goals.

Break each goal down into small, manageable steps.

Once you've defined the goal, set out the small steps you're going to take to accomplish it. Will you set up a separate savings account? Will you need to manage your money more carefully? Stop spending money on something else in order to have \$100 extra? Will you deposit the money into the savings account yourself or set up an allotment? Work out the specific steps.

Choose a starting point and target completion dates for each step.

After you've established "how" you're going to reach your goal, choose a starting point. Will you start this month? Next month? Then decide on target dates for each step. For example, "I will open a separate savings account by the 15th of this month and stop by disbursing to set up the allotment by the 30th." Finally, don't forget to determine a final date for completing your goal.

Setting target dates will make your goal more specific and is especially helpful if you tend to procrastinate; they can prevent you from rushing around trying to do the entire project the last week before the deployment ends.

Plan a reward for each accomplishment.

This can provide the motivation you need to complete the goal, as well as give you something to look forward to. After all, being able to set goals and achieve them is something to be proud of. You deserve a reward!

Act on your plan.

Now that you've planned out how and when you will work toward reaching your goal, it's time to put the plan into action and come one step closer to success!



Time Management Skills

How many times do you find yourself saying, “If only I had the time!” Do you feel like there are never enough hours in each day to complete all the things that need to be done? Does this leave you feeling disorganized and stressed out? Both the pre-deployment period and the deployment itself are busy times for service members and family members. Pre-deployment work-ups, combined with personal and family “To Do” lists, make time a precious commodity. You can learn how to make the most of the time you have now, during the deployment or anytime; feel less pressured and more in control by following these five steps to better time management.

1. Ask yourself, “Where does the time go?”

For a period of one week (or at a minimum, 2 days and a weekend), record in a log what you do every half hour. You will probably be surprised to see what you actually do with your time. Learn to identify specific problems that keep you from using your time well. Look for the following:

“SERIOUS TIME WASTERS”

- ☐ Anxiety
- ☐ Guilt
- ☐ Worry
- ☐ Depression
- ☐ Procrastination
- ☐ Wavering on decisions
- ☐ Excessive smoking, drinking, eating, watching TV, sleeping, house cleaning, etc.

Some of these may be normal responses to the upcoming deployment and may be a natural part of adjusting to or accepting the situation. The amount of time spent in a given area will help you define whether or not it’s a time waster.

2. Recognize and meet your needs.

Decide what is non-negotiable in terms of life’s important things. Look at the different areas in your life (e.g. family, home, job, leisure, friends, marriage, etc.) that require your time, then determine what areas you want to give more attention to and what areas you can spend less time focusing on. Personal time is often the first thing to go. But it’s actually very important. It gives you an opportunity to:

- ☐ Think without interruption or distraction
- ☐ Reflect on your life
- ☐ Ponder ideas
- ☐ Prepare yourself for the deployment
- ☐ Manage stress in healthy ways
- ☐ Be productive or relaxed—whichever is desired
- ☐ Remember: It’s OK to take “personal time” and even make this time a priority. You deserve it!

3. Set goals and assign priorities.

Plan and organize your activities so that they are related to your needs. Keep a master list of things to be done and go through it each night. Ask yourself, “Are these items necessary to me? My family? My home? My job? Why am I doing these tasks? Could I eliminate some? Could I delegate some?”

As you go through your “Things To Do List”, prioritize each item. Decide what you must do first, second, etc. What can wait? What can be deleted? Then make a daily list of activities needed to accomplish those goals.

Tips for Accomplishing Your Goals

- ☐ If you find yourself avoiding and wasting time over a high priority task, break it into smaller activities that are easily accomplished.
- ☐ Learn to accept your own pace. Ask yourself, realistically, “How fast can I expect to get things done?”

- ☐ Resolve to be resolute— don’t procrastinate. Make decisions and stick to them.
- ☐ Plan and organize your activities so that you won’t back track or retrace your steps.
- ☐ Handle paperwork (or other items) only once.
- ☐ Make telephone calls instead of spending time in meetings.
- ☐ Limit interruptions—reserve a quiet hour for those high priority items.
- ☐ Find a quiet place to work. Have phone calls screened. Close your door.

4. Minimize wasted time.

Look back at your time log and identify “free pockets of time” that can be used to get something done that you don’t seem to have enough time to do. For example:

“FREE POCKETS OF TIME”

- ☐ Waiting in lines
- ☐ During a quiet watch
- ☐ Traffic/commuting
- ☐ While clothes are washing/drying
- ☐ Baby’s nap time

5. Follow through.

Once you have finalized your “Things To Do List” start working on the first item. As you move through the list, cross off the activities accomplished and congratulate yourself on a job well done!

KEEPING IN TOUCH

GENERAL COMMUNICATION OPTIONS

Check with the command for information on the specific communication options available. Communication options may be disconnected without notice due to command mission and location. Before deploying, discuss which options will be best for you and your families and how you wish to use them.

Sailor Phones

An immediate contact with family members using time-limited pre-paid cards and phones onboard the ship. Sailors initiate the phone call. Limited privacy and time differences between Sailor and home.

E-Mail

A time-delayed contact with family members. Sailors need access to computer to type message. Message is then processed by the command POC into the internet system. Both Sailor and family member may initiate contact. Limited privacy and command access to satellite.

Regular Mail

A time-delayed contact, but also the most personalized connection to loved ones. Very private. Sometimes unpredictable. It is common to receive nothing for a week or more and then a stack of letters in one day. Number your letters to avoid confusion.

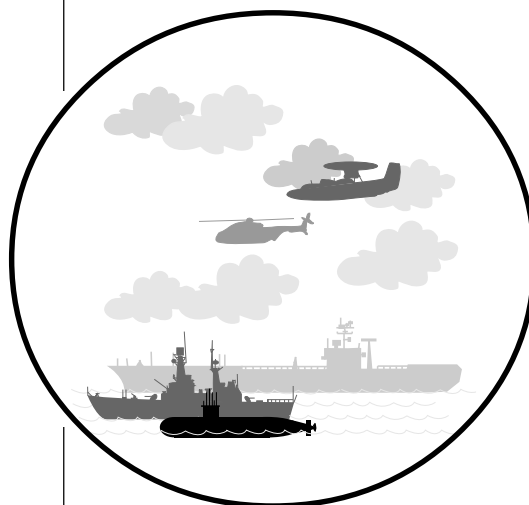
Emergency messages

American Red Cross (Shore to Sea)

The American Red Cross sends emergency messages to commands of deployed service members.

- ☐ Basic information needed about service member: *name, rank, social security number, command/division.*
- ☐ Commanding officers make the decision concerning granting emergency leave.
- ☐ Command criteria for granting emergency leave may vary.
- ☐ Service member is responsible for transportation costs once in CONUS.
- ☐ Emergency Notification Phone Number:
1-800-272-7337

Military members and families spend a lot of time apart. Whether it's a spouse, parent, or relative at sea, a family can still remain close. Discussing communication expectations — phone calls, e-mail, and letter writing — can make the difference in a deployment being difficult or manageable. Take a moment to review options for "Keeping in Touch!"



BEFORE

- ☐ Recognize your feelings, needs, and expectations and talk to your partner about them.
- ☐ Identify your support systems: Family Support Group, family, friends, place of worship.
- ☐ Agree how often you will write, and what type of information will be shared.
- ☐ Be romantic before the deployment. Create special moments to cherish!
- ☐ Discuss and plan how you will spend deployment day.
- ☐ Plan ways to keep the connection with relatives. Decide who will write and/or send gifts to parents, etc.
- ☐ Discuss other ways to communicate: video and cassette tapes, sailor phones, e-mail, or regular mail.
- ☐ Start homecoming plans and communicate them throughout the deployment.
- ☐ Put your family on the mailing list for newsletters and official communications from your command.
- ☐ Indicate special events, birthdays, school, and community activities on a calendar and duplicate. These calendars can also be used for the homecoming countdown.
- ☐ For special occasions, flowers and gifts can be ordered in advance for family members at home.
- ☐ Buy cards for special occasions before the deployment.
- ☐ Plan in advance for length and frequency of phone calls. Making a few ground rules for telephone calls will help keep phone bills under control.
- ☐ Discuss how you want to share bad news. Try to write about solutions or plans, not problems.
- ☐ Give your special someone a keepsake for the deployment. This is an emotional tie that can keep you connected when you feel lonely.
- ☐ Have photos taken of you and your family together and of your spouse or loved one alone.
- ☐ Discuss and develop a list of items for care packages the deployer wants and needs.
- ☐ Give your family the ombudsman's number. If your family is out of the area, they can call 1-800-FSC-LINE to reach the careline.

AFTER

- ☐ Expect face-to-face communication with your spouse or loved ones to feel awkward at first. One thing you can count on is that things will not be the same as when you left. You will be different, as will the people you left behind.
- ☐ Take the time to listen to each other. Acknowledge the great job you both have done communicating with each other during the deployment.
- ☐ Review the deployment:
 - How well were you prepared for the deployment?
 - What will you do differently during the next deployment?
 - Did the frequency of mail or care packages meet your expectations?
 - Were your phone bills manageable?
- ☐ Discussing the above statements and any other areas of concern may help build your relationship and coping skills for the next deployment.

DURING

- ☐ Number your letters to avoid confusion. Mail may accumulate before arriving onboard the ship.
- ☐ Write often. Writing can be in letter or journal form. Letting your friends and family know how day-to-day life is, and how you are, is important for successful separations.
- ☐ Write about homecoming plans.
- ☐ Encourage each other to achieve goals. Give praise when goals are reached.
- ☐ Write love letters.
- ☐ Video and audio tapes enhance your communication.

Care Packages:

- ☐ Service members like to get goodies from home. Here are a few suggestions:
 - Cookies
 - Cereal
 - Magazines
 - Books
 - Videos
 - Audio tapes
 - Candy bars
 - Stamps
 - Hometown newspapers
 - Puzzles
 - Playing cards
 - Grooming items
- ☐ Wrap food securely so it's edible upon arrival. It can take up to a month for packages to reach any given destination.
- ☐ Keep a list of things you need to discuss by the phone. When you get a call, you will save frustration by talking about the "need to know" items first in case your call gets disconnected.
- ☐ Use prepaid phone cards where available. Check for international availability.



MENTAL HEALTH BREAKS

Get the group together and do activities that require little brain power and offer lots of laughs. Often times it is easy to get each of the members to sign up to “host” an event. They make all of the arrangements and notify everyone of the details. No matter which activity you choose, don’t forget the videos and snapshots.

- ☐ Have dinner out. Follow this up with a play, movie or sporting event.
- ☐ Go bowling. Go for one night or form a team on a league.
- ☐ Take a tour. Of a local attraction or of the area of your command.
- ☐ Chinese Auction. Everyone brings a (NICE) White Elephant. Participant “bid” on items by placing a dime in a basket that circulates around the room. A timer is set for a random amount of time and when it goes off, the last person to put a dime in the basket gets the item.
- ☐ Guest Speakers. Hold a workshop on Assertiveness, Time Management, Protocol, Stress/Burnout, Spouse Employment. Contact FFSC for a list of speakers.
- ☐ Learn a craft. Have the talented members of your club share their craft with the rest of the group.
- ☐ Ethnic Food Cooking Demonstration. Find talent at your local restaurants, a talented spouse, local Chef’s College or Caterer. Garnishing ideas are also popular.
- ☐ Beauty Workshop. Have an image consultant talk to your group about fashion, colors, wardrobing and make-up.
- ☐ Auto Maintenance. Learn simple car maintenance tips from the base hobby shop.
- ☐ Security. Have a Police Officer talk about car, home, and personal safety.
- ☐ Hat and Gloves Meeting. Everyone must wear a hat and gloves. This can range from pillbox and silk to bike helmet and rubber.
- ☐ Show and Tell. Just like the kids’ do in school.
- ☐ Wedding Albums. Share your life with club members and demonstrate the more than one dimensional side of yourself.
- ☐ Come as you are. Call everyone over for an impromptu get-together. For close knit groups, show up at the door of an unsuspecting victim.
- ☐ Learn. To square dance, golf, sail, scuba dive, the list is endless.
- ☐ Wine and Cheese. Have each guest bring their favorite to share.
- ☐ Celebrity Party. Come as your favorite.
- ☐ Rent movies. Pop popcorn and sit on the floor. Have each member bring his/her favorite and secret ballot to elect the best two. Chances are there will be lots of duplicates.
- ☐ Play cards.
- ☐ Slumber Party. Just like when you were twelve, only the stories are better.
- ☐ My Spouse’s Favorite Recipe. A twist to the standby potluck. This dish just may be something the cook detests!
- ☐ Build a Sub Night. Each spouse brings an ingredient to share.
- ☐ Wok works. Each spouse brings an ingredient pre-sliced and ready to add to the stir-fry.
- ☐ A garden or plant exchange. Each spouse brings a plant or cutting to exchange with another.

This is just a short list to get you started. With a little imagination from you and your group, the list will grow.



Children's Activities

A major part of keeping families intact during deployments is doing projects together in which everyone of any age can participate. Having parties and social events for children can be a great way to bring military children together for fun, friendship, and a sense of belonging. Some of these ideas may come in handy when children start questioning deployment absences with "Why?" "Where?" "When?" and "How much longer?" These activities are also good for small numbers (i.e., several families) or large numbers such as the Wardroom, Ready Room, or Family Support Group. And don't forget to videotape or take pictures of the kids and their activities, especially if some of these finished products are sent to the ship!

Children's Sunday Sundae Parties.

Have each family bring their favorite toppings. (Let the club furnish the ice cream, if funds allow.) Creativity soars, as there is "something about ice cream."

Picnic in the Park.

Each family brings a salad to share, something to grill, and drinks for themselves. Either before eating or after, have parent/child potato sack and three-legged races, relay races, or simply sit back and enjoy the scenery.

Meet at the Beach/Pool.

Take advantage of the area's numerous beaches and waterways. Having several adults watching the children makes the outing a little easier; or use on-base or apartment pools. Pack lots of suntan lotion and don't forget yourself, too — sun, sea and sand brings out the kid in all of us!

Costume Party.

Don't reserve this idea just for Halloween! There's Easter, July 4th Parades, Miss America, etc.

Movies.

Take the kids to the movies — check with MWR to get discounted tickets — or rent some children's videos for an impromptu movie marathon.

Game Day.

Break out the board games or card games and introduce today's children to yesterday's games. It's great entertainment and doesn't have to involve a computer!

Wands and Crowns.

Children can make wands out of cardboard boxes, aluminum foil, straws and ribbons. Crowns can be made out of construction paper.

Hats and Shoes.

Have children dress in hats (or related accessories) and shoes of other professions, i.e., nurses, doctors, construction workers, policeman, firefighter, bee keeper (bring honey — no bees!).

Fore or Score!

Take the kids Putt-Putting or bowling.

Dress-Up Dinner.

Give the children their own "black tie affair." Wait on them (and teach them!) how to handle themselves before, during and after the event.

Craft Day.

Make a simple craft with the children such as laminated placemats for Holidays or anyday. Send an "I Love You" or "I Miss You" placemat to dad, mom, grandparents, etc.

"Ransom Note."

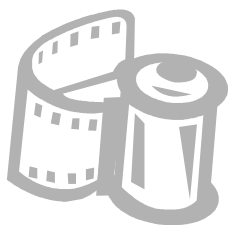
Have kids cut out words from newspapers, magazines, junk mail, etc., glue onto fun paper and send as a note. Cut out words could also be used to caption photos.





Morale, Welfare & Recreation (MWR).

MWR has a wealth of information on all topics from sports to movies to party ideas. Be sure to pick up their monthly publications and take advantage of their special DISCOUNTED ticket offers – everything from sporting events (local and professional), movies, theatre, museums, etc. They've done the legwork and secured the discounts. All you have to do is GO!



Film.

When developing pictures, always get double prints – as the saying goes: “One to keep and one to share.” Also, when taking pictures, take two or three shots of the same thing. This saves having to pour over the negatives and send in an extra reprint order. Save leftover “giveaways” to include with Christmas, Thinking of You or other anytime cards.

Maps.

Hang a large world map (or use the map provided in the Virginian-Pilot) on a cork board and have the children use colored pushpins to chart the progress of the command.



Garlands.

Create and decorate construction paper ornaments (hearts, ghosts, Easter eggs, pumpkins, Santas, shamrocks, Stars, Christmas trees, etc.). Hook them together to form a garland which can then be used to decorate a Wardroom, Ready Room, Mess Deck or work space. Variation: Take long strips of plastic wrap and roll goodies in the wrap. Section off between goodies with colorful curling ribbon. Ends can be knotted to create individual leis (great for beach parties) or left as one long chain and hung as a garland, depending on the weight of the goodies!

Time Chain.

Make 3 paper chains: the first should have as many links as there are days in the deployment; the second, the number of weeks in the deployment; and the third, as many months. As the links are removed, send them to the deployed parent. Seeing the chain become shorter is believing that time is passing!!

Plan Menus.

While the command is in a foreign port, try having the kids plan a menu that their deployed parent might sample in that port. This can be as easy as French Fries, Belgian Waffles, Kielbasa, or spaghetti and pizza!

Foreign Cultures.

While dining on the appropriate foreign foods, take some time to learn about the culture of the country that the parent is visiting. Perhaps an upcoming holiday (Ramadan, Bastille Day, Cinco de Mayo, etc.) can spark a thumbnail sketch of the country's history, customs, traditions, etc. Or draw on the area's resources (NATO connections, people who were stationed overseas) and invite someone to come (in traditional dress?) and share their country's history, culture, homes, schools, etc. Can be lots of fun and entertaining, not to mention insightful.

Holiday Parties for Children

Holidays are a special time for families and need to be memorable for kids of all ages, including adults! There are many books on planning children's parties available in stores and at the library. When planning parties, remember that a little activity goes a long way — children are often overwhelmed with too much stimulation. Often they are content in simply being with other kids and participating in some of the following ideas:

Valentine's Day

Create Valentine cards.

Use construction paper, doilies, old cards, etc. Include current photos and plan on sending them to the deployed parent.

Make Valentine cookies.

These can be as easy as buying refrigerated sugar cookies to bake and decorate or as complicated as dragging out the flour and your favorite cookie cutter recipe.

St. Patrick's Day

Cookies.

Pillsbury makes refrigerated cookies with a green shamrock in the center. Slice, bake and serve warm or decorate with frosting, jimmies, etc.

Pot o'Gold.

Fill a small pot with gold foil covered chocolate coins and cookies and place it at the end of a rainbow which a Leprechaun has made and hidden somewhere in the house.

Jello.

Make lime jello and pour into shamrock molds. Serve plain or with whipped cream.

Easter

Easter Eggs.

Break out the dyes and color hardboiled eggs; paint wooden eggs; decorate plastic eggs with paint or stickers; bake Easter egg cookies or cupcakes and decorate with frosting, jelly beans, etc. Do ahead of time and use in egg hunts, Easter baskets, etc. Remember to take pictures!!

Easter Egg Hunt.

Divide children into several age groups and send them off to search for eggs. Reuseable plastic eggs filled with jelly beans, coins, all kinds of gift certificates (McDonald's, bowling, miniature golf, movies) allow for multiple hunts. Include a "golden egg" hidden in each hunt which can be turned in for a special prize appropriate to the age group. Remember the video cam!!!

Easter Bunny.

Rent, buy or create an Easter Bunny costume and take pictures of the children visiting with the bunny.

Pot Luck Easter Brunch.

Nice reason for a get-together before or after the egg hunt and a good way to unload all of those hardboiled eggs — devil 'em or make egg salad sandwiches!

Carnival Games / Birthday Bashes

If carnival game parties are used, divide the children into groups and rotate them through all games. This creates a more "organized" atmosphere!

Check with MWR for "hi-tech" games/activities which can include pony rides, dunk tanks, bouncing platforms, etc.

Use balls (ping-pong, nerf, tennis, etc.) with Velcro glued on and tossed at a piece of felt covered plywood cutout relating to a theme (baseball, football, Christmas tree, clown, etc.). Give special prizes for bull's eyes, TDs, homers, as appropriate.

"Fish" for small prizes. Paint or decorate a large cardboard box to resemble a pond, a sack, or holiday container. Kids take turns "fishing" by dropping a line through a hole and "hooking" a prize. (Ideas for hooks can be opened paper clips or velcro.) Or have the "hook" consist of a clothespin attached to a string which, when dropped through the opening, gets a prize attached to it courtesy of a hidden helper. A gentle tug signals the child that they've "hooked a whopper." (Determine whether prizes will be wrapped or unwrapped ahead of time, as well as size, cost, color, etc.)

Face Painting. Children of all ages enjoy this activity. Have your cameras ready to share memories with the command.

Treasure or Scavenger Hunts can be “themed” according to the occasion.

Bingo, plain or themed: Use Valentine candies (non-melting!), jelly beans, M&Ms, pennies, popcorn, etc. to cover the called numbers or shapes instead of the usual chips or daubers.

Independence Day

“All Hands Picnic.”

Show your patriotism and dress up in red, white and blue. Bring all-American fare like hotdogs and hamburgers to eat but save room for red, white and blue desserts like strawberries, ice creams, and blueberry pies.

Community Parade.

Make a float or form a group (costumed, marching, band?) to participate in the parade. While this takes lots of time and organization, it is well worth the effort, especially if preserved in pictures!

Banners, Bunting and Bows.

With the plentiful availability of red, white and blue materials, this is especially practical for use now as well as when the deployment ends (just wrap, roll and store carefully)!

Christmas

Movies and Popcorn.

Rent old cartoons and movies frequently watched at Christmas. Most clubs have a big screen TV or VCR that they will rent for a nominal charge. Santa could visit at the end! Or, invite kids over for movies while mom shops!!! Guaranteed good behavior!!!

Color Pages and Christmas Cards.

Have the kids color their own cards or one giant card to be sent to the command.

Stockings.

Fill with donated items ranging from your own home baked cookies to certificates from fast food chains, toys from local merchants, MWR, etc.

Caroling.

Get a group together and have fun serenading your local neighborhood. Warm up afterwards with hot chocolate, mulled cider and Christmas cookies.



ADDITIONAL IDEAS

Halloween

The granddaddy of all themed parties can be spooky, scary, or autumn-festive as determined by the ages and numbers of children involved. So break out the orange, black, and purple lights; decorate with spider webs; hang ghosts from doorways; and power up that front doormat that screams or moans when you step on it! Remember the cameras or videocams and plan early if reserving a room, a fortune teller, a face painter, or a visit by Frankenstein or the Mummy!

Jack o'Lanterns.

Take the kids to the pumpkin patch and pick the appropriate pumpkin. A couple of smaller pumpkins might work better than one large one. Decorate the pumpkins by either carving (adults only) or coloring with magic markers. (Very small gourds make great pumpkins, left as is, or add wacky stickers or magic marker colorings.)

Cookies.

Slice and bake sugar cookies with chocolate bats and orange pumpkins already inside each roll. Decorate with frostings and jimmies or eat plain before they turn cold!

Bake up a batch of brownies and ice with orange frosting. Use chocolate chips or raisins for faces, bat outlines, etc.

Trick or Treat at the Mall.

Less mess, less organization! For smaller groups this may sound too easy to be true, but it is fun. Area mall merchants and restaurants are very helpful in providing a safe place for kids (and moms!) to come dressed to "go for the goodies!"

Costume Contest.

Have special prizes for the prettiest, scariest, funniest, cutest...

The Great Pumpkin.

Rent, buy or create a Great Pumpkin costume and don't forget your cameras!

Witch's Pantry.

The "beauty" of this idea is imagination: large, unpitted olives or peeled grapes become eyeballs; warmed tomato juice is blood; warmed, gooey oatmeal is "stomach contents;" cooked, oiled spaghetti is worms; cold tortilla shells can be cut into bat wings; strategically draped thread or yarn within the pathway are spiderwebs; tie fuzzy bees on strings and call them spiders, flies, or baby bats; cooked rotini noodles are maggots; long balloons "slimed" with egg whites or grease are intestines; chocolate pudding becomes brains; a pile of chocolate frosting becomes... well, you get the idea! And if you need more ideas, just ask the teenagers!!!! Not only can they think up the grossest stuff, they can also act as "guides" and describe to each "guest" what is being felt and touched!!!

Traditional Haunted House.

Determine how dark or scary the "house" is to be, then use a room with two entrances (or section off part of a room with blankets or drapes to create an entrance/exit). Inside the room, "the sky's the limit": create scary lighting effects, play weird music, puff in air blasts, have a fortune teller, ghosts, witches, monsters or a Witch's Pantry.

Movies/Videos.

Show classic horror thrillers from Boris Karloff, to Stephen King and Johnny Depp; have a "Scream"-athon; don't forget the series, "Nightmare on Elm Street," "Friday the 13th" or "Halloween" and of course, don't forget the popcorn! This is particularly good for teens or older kids who aren't interested in trick or treating. The movies can start early and run late, especially if Halloween falls on a weekend. Send the kids home with a tasty feast of blood and worms (spaghetti with lots of sauce!) or other late night breakfast courtesy of the Witch's Pantry!



When Dad's at sea at the time of birth

When Dad's at sea at the time of birth or for a good part of baby's first year, special efforts need to be made to capture and share the events that occur during these important days.

The birth of a baby is a profound experience for all parents. But when parents are apart at the time of birth, both mother and father should consider the feelings each may be experiencing. It is important to communicate often during this period to:

- Share the birth experience
- Share feelings about accepting the new role of parenthood
- Share information about the baby's growth and development
- Prepare for "family life"
- Reaffirm your commitment to one another

HOW MIGHT DAD BE FEELING?

Dads who are absent during the baby's first year experience many different emotions:

THE FIRST BLUSH OF PRIDE:

Most dads are proud and happy to announce the birth of their child to family and friends. It is also a time for passing out cigars, congratulations, and relief.

APPREHENSION:

Fatherhood is a serious responsibility. Many new fathers are anxious as they approach the new roles, demands, and challenges that lie ahead. Encouragement from others is helpful.

GUILT AND ANGER:

Both of these feelings gnaw at many new fathers who are separated from their wives and new babies. But what all new parents must do when they are apart at the time of birth is to accept the fact of separation and share as much of the new and exciting parenting experiences as possible through frequent communication.

CURIOSITY:

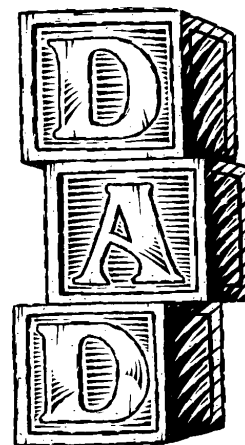
Every father wants to know about his baby's looks, likes, size, and abilities. During times of deployment, pictures and descriptions are a warm and welcomed opportunity for dad to get to know the newest family member.

CONCERN ABOUT FAMILY'S CARE:

Each new father wants to be assured that mother and baby are both safe and well cared for. Planning ahead to ensure that someone will be able to help mom and baby during his absence (family, friends, neighbors) will go a long way toward reducing worry. The command ombudsman may be an additional source for information and referrals.

JEALOUSY:

It is not uncommon for new fathers to feel a bit jealous of the amount of attention that is now focused on the baby. It is important to remember that infant needs must be met first and that adults, because they are mature and capable, will usually need to wait for their needs to be met. If parents share the household duties and care of the baby, they will have more time for one another and others.



HOW MIGHT MOM BE FEELING?

Moms share many of the same feelings. They also experience these:

EXHAUSTION:

Most new mothers are surprised at how tired they get caring for an infant 24 hours a day. A father needs to understand how draining this is for a new mom. When he comes home, his help with the baby is vital to strengthening the relationship, the family, and her physical abilities. Parents need to give each other their active support, recognition, and encouragement every day.

FULFILLMENT AND EXCITEMENT:

Many new mothers feel fulfilled and excited following childbirth. They enjoy touching, holding, and cuddling their new babies. A very special love develops between the two of them as they get to know and love each other. A father who is away at the time of birth can also develop this special love for the baby when he returns from sea.

PRESSURE OR DEPRESSION:

It is not uncommon for a new mother to experience what many people call "baby blues." New mothers go through very noticeable physical and emotional changes during pregnancy and childbirth. Some mothers feel overwhelmed with the changes in their bodies and with their baby's demands. New moms need help and understanding during the first few months to make the needed adjustments. Letters of encouragement stating how much the father values what mom is doing for the baby will help greatly.

INCREASED KNOWLEDGE AND CONFIDENCE:

New mothers have lots of time to learn about parenting and child care because they are usually the primary care givers. They learn about babies by trial and error, by reading, by talking to other good parents, and by visiting the doctor. Fathers can also learn by these methods and are encouraged to join their wives in attending parenting classes sponsored by Fleet and Family Support Centers and other agencies. When moms and dads become knowledgeable and self-assured, marriages and family life are strengthened.

CAPTURING THE FEELINGS

There are many ways a new mother can help a father get to know and love his new baby.

- Write letters often describing the baby's looks, likes, personality, abilities, and growth.
- Send tapes of the baby's sounds and mother's soothing voice.
- Send pictures of the baby.
- Send the baby's footprints, a lock of hair, booties, a hat, or some other things belonging to the baby.
- Write letters from the baby as if the baby were talking to dad.
- Keep a diary to share with dad.

COMING HOME AGAIN

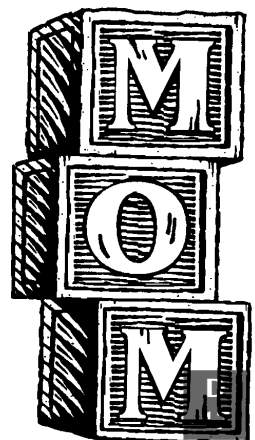
Life together will be very different once the baby has arrived. Talk about sharing the joys as well as the responsibilities of parenthood. Be sure private time is spent together as a couple.

Dad needs to remember how mom described the baby and the baby's abilities. Try to be realistic about expectations of the baby and this new change in your life.

It is important for dad to ease back into the family gently by taking cues from mom. A very young baby needs lots of cuddling, skin contact, and time to study the eyes and face. An older baby (7 months plus) may view dad as a stranger and may require more time to accept him.

Expect dad to do things differently from mom. Dad's ways, as long as they are safe (no rough handling), will complement mom's ways and probably will delight the baby.

Coming home to a new baby isn't always easy for fathers. But dad will be able to "catch up" and establish a warm and loving relationship with baby if he is persistent, observant, and patient.



STRATEGIES *for* HELPING CHILDREN WITH DEPLOYMENT



Deployments are a fact of life for military families. Children will all react to the separation in different ways. Following are some tips to assist parents.

- ☐ Remember that you are the “expert” on your child. You know what is normal behavior for her/him and will be the best one to notice when things are out of sync.
 - ☐ Reassure your children often that they are loved by those at home and by their deployed parent. Give lots of hugs.
 - ☐ As appropriate, be honest with your children. Trying to hide things from them will only lead them to imagine the situation is much worse than it really is.
 - ☐ Understand your child’s level of development. Know what is normal behavior for your child’s age. Be aware of changes and seek assistance early.
 - ☐ Listen to your children and help to clear up any misunderstandings they may have (Mom/Dad does get to eat and sleep even though their bed/refrigerator is at home!). Be with your child when watching/reading news so you can answer questions. In times of crisis, limit their exposure to media so that it does not increase their anxiety.
 - ☐ Expect regression, changes, and stress due to separation.
- ☐ Talk about your child’s feelings and allow him or her to do the same. Accept those feelings even though they may be very different from your own.
 - ☐ Encourage your children to talk, let them share options, suggestions, and solutions for problems. Listen for clues in their conversations with others. Encourage them to express anger verbally, not physically.
 - ☐ Provide additional adult relationships for your children, which may include grandparents, neighbors, friends, teachers, religious leaders, coaches, scout leaders, etc.
 - ☐ Inform your child’s teachers/guidance counselors about the deployment so they are better able to provide assistance to the child if necessary. Ask if there is a deployment support group available in the school. FFSC staff can help start one if requested.
 - ☐ Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words. Children learn their coping skills from those around them. How well you cope with the deployment will have a significant influence on how your children will react.
 - ☐ Take care of yourself. You need to eat well, get sufficient rest and exercise, and spend time doing things you enjoy. If you don’t take care of yourself, you won’t be able to care for your children.

Return & Reunion Homecoming Program

Making a Good Thing Better

Military personnel start preparing to return to family and homeport during the transit home from deployment. This is also the most “teachable moment,” the ideal time to discuss returning home by utilizing the Fleet and Family Support Centers’ Return and Reunion, or R&R, Homecoming Program. Fleet and Family Support Centers of Hampton Roads can provide a team of professional educators to embark at the final overseas port. As the ship transits en route to CONUS, the team conducts a variety of workshops focusing on personal relationships, financial concerns, and readjustment issues.

Reunion and Intimacy

Discussion involves common issues of deployers returning to relationships

Singles Homeward Bound

About adjustment, relationships, and things to do when you return home

Returning to Children

How children of all ages react to your return

New Parents of Infants

Adapting to a new baby and a special celebration for new dads

Car Buying

How to save money and not get ripped off

Money Management/Buyer Beware

Basic information and practical advice on financial matters, consumer danger zones, and state laws

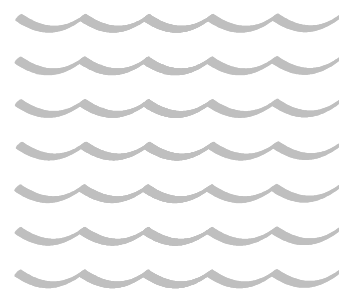
Resource Training for Command Leadership

Provides leadership, E-6 and above, with the most current information on local agencies and resources available to assist service members who experience problems upon return to their homeport

Ensuring a Successful Homecoming Program

The following information will help you make the most of your Homecoming Program.

- The R&R Team will work closely with the command to provide programming that does not conflict with ship-board schedules and operational demands.
- An initial planning meeting with the CO/XO/CMDMC/COB/SgtMaj or command point of contact is needed when the team reports onboard.
- Upon arrival, the team desires to brief available Officers and Chief Petty Officers/Senior Staff NCO on the R&R program and address their questions.



Program Locations

- Crews mess or other large space which accommodates the most people should be used for programs which draw the most interest: Reunion and Intimacy, Singles Homeward Bound, Car Buying, and Money Management/Buyer Beware.
- Training rooms, chapels, libraries, etc., with a smaller capacity can be used for Returning to Children and the New Parents of Infants programs. These usually have a smaller draw and more intimate discussions.
- The R&R Team is flexible. They can use the fo’c’sle, helo hangar, or any other work spaces to present programs.



BRIGHTEN THE DAY OF THE DEPLOYED SERVICE MEMBER

Seeing them off is the most difficult part of deployment. Going back to the house, washing the laundry, making the bed, and clearing breakfast dishes are overwhelming chores. These can also be delayed, they don't need to be done immediately. **Have a farewell brunch.** Bring a dish and meet at someone's home to commiserate together. Often times more laughs are shared than tears and healthy attitudes come out of this one get-together. Only when your group has the proper attitude, can they embark on boosting the spirits of their loved ones far away.

Some deployed commands are less fortunate in the aspect of receiving mail and do not have the luxury of sending monthly packages. This being the case, careful planning before a cruise, or patrol, must be done. All or most ideas that follow can be done before the command leaves. There are also little things you can do beforehand to give the crew members a chuckle, be it on the bridge, in the ready room, wardroom, or on the mess decks.



Treats For Our Sweets

No matter when the command deploys, many calendar pages will be flipped before Homecoming Day arrives. Birthdays, Holidays, Anniversaries and other special occasions will be spent solo. But remember that your spouse too, will be solo and usually pretty far away from family and friends as these special days come and go, so surprise or brighten those special days some of these ideas:

Before the Ships Sail:

Adopt a Sailor. Spouses share responsibilities for including treats for the various bachelors, especially if there aren't any significant others involved. Extended families can be included, but be sure to check with the bachelor first before contacting his family. Obtain birthday info and other important dates directly from the bachelor or get a reliable buddy to fill in the necessary details. Don't be upset if some bachelors don't wish to be adopted.

Bon Voyage Package. Think small but practical items (remember space is limited) such as: disposable cameras, blank video tapes (be sure someone will have a vid-

eo camera onboard), pre-printed address labels, stamps, letter writing materials, phone cards, a journal, refrigerator type magnets with family photos attached, favorite coffee mug (fill it with kisses, M&Ms, peanuts or other favorite snack food), new or favorite CDs or tapes, (batteries?), paperback books, magazines, crosswords, deck of cards, etc., etc. Either surprise the lucky recipient of such thoughtfulness when you say your goodbyes or arrange to have it waiting in the stateroom, on the rack or delivered shortly after pulling away from the pier.

Perpetual Calendar. (Directions included) Determine a contact person for the wardroom, ready room or mess deck who will regularly receive and update the monthly packages of cards, jokes, cartoons, pictures, etc. to be slipped into the daily, numbered pockets of the month. Try to get the calendar and first installment (week or month) ready a day or two before the ship departs. Use the calendar as an easy way to promote fun working and socializing parties within the group.

Cards/Love Notes. Don't be bashful, just tasteful! Secretly slip a couple of these in the bags as you help pack.

After the Ships Sail:

Decide as a group what to do about certain times or holidays that the deployment faces. Should the group put together one large Trick or Treat bag for everyone to share in the wardroom, ready room or mess deck or do they want to individually provide for their own spouses? Set limits as to expense, size, and weight of individual items, not only to keep shipping costs down but to avoid hurt feelings should someone receive a smaller sized

gift or worse, be left out entirely. Always bear in mind the space limitations that exist onboard – that space will get smaller as the deployment winds down! Remember to set firm dates for completion of gifts and stick to the timetable. Lastly, realize that some may not wish to celebrate the same days in the same ways.

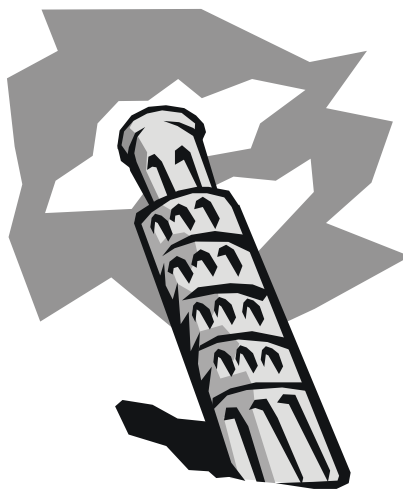
The following ideas are suggested for their ease and flexibility, whether dealing as one individual or a group. They are designed

to get the creative juices flowing as ideas often suggest other ideas. Pinching "this" from one or borrowing "that" from another is by all means encouraged. The object is to have fun while spreading fun. So pick the time frame when your "Sweets" will be deployed and begin gathering up those "Treats."

FAMILY PROJECTS

A major part of keeping families intact during deployments is doing projects together that everyone of every age can have input towards. Pass these ideas along to the spouses in your groups to help them get through the lonely days when their children ask questions such as “Why?”, “Where?”, and “When?”.

- ☐ Maps. Hang a large world map on a cork board and have the kids use tacks to chart the progress of the command (VA Pilot maps or can get maps in local newspaper).
- ☐ Plan menus. While the command is in a foreign port, try having the kids plan a menu that their deployed parent might sample in that port. French Fries are sure to be France and we aren't going to tell them that the French come to America to sample this delicacy. Belgium Waffles, Kielbasa, and Spaghetti are just a few ideas.
- ☐ Time Chain. Make 3 paper chains. The first one should have as many links as there are days in the deployment, the second as many weeks, and the third as many months. As the links are removed, let them send them to their deployed parent.
- ☐ Big Day Chart. Include dates such as birthdays, holidays, and important days in the child's life. Let them mark the days as they pass so that time does not stand still.
- ☐ Foreign Cultures. Select a special time of the day to learn a bit about the culture of a country their parent might visit during a deployment. Learn a song, a phrase in the language, a game, or a bit of history. Deployments need not be boring, they can be educational for all.
- ☐ Homecoming packets. Give each child a bag containing the following items: 1) felt pennant with letters to glue on saying “I love you and _____” (the command name); 2) a yellow ribbon to tie where ever the child decides; 3) balloons to decorate the house; 4) an anchor chain counting the last 7 days of deployment; 5) a paper for making a sign to hang anywhere the child wants; 6) a list of things to do before the deployed parent returns, i.e., clean room, wash car, etc.; 7) paper to make a coupon book for things he/she wants to do with mom/dad.



ADDITIONAL FAMILY PROJECTS

- ☐ Make a monthly newsletter from home. Give it a title and include photos with captions, cartoons, news articles, poems and kids school work.
- ☐ Send a fifteen foot banner with a message just for him/her.
- ☐ Write on different colored stationary, or use different colored ink.
- ☐ Cut words from the newspaper and use them to make a ransom note.
- ☐ Use song titles and lines to say how you feel.
- ☐ Make a calendar with his/her families birth-days, anniversaries, etc. marked on it. Pre-buy all of the cards so that he/she may send them him/herself.
- ☐ Videotape everything your family does and send a monthly tape.
- ☐ Spiral letter. Write your letter in a spiral, starting in the center. You know you're lonely when you actually have time for this.



ADD YOUR
IDEAS
.....
HERE

Calendar Year of ideas

Not all commands deploy during the same time of year, the following is a sampling of monthly ideas to start your creative thinking.



January

New Year's Eve in a Box

Decorate plastic champagne flutes with markers, stickers, pictures and fill with sweets or treats. Roll up a couple of resolutions sealed with a heart sticker!

Super Bowl Sunday Boxed Party

Microwave popcorn, pretzels, peanuts, M&Ms, snacks, snacks and more snacks. Don't forget football theme plates, napkins, bowls, etc., as well as team paraphernalia.



February

Groundhog Day

February 2. Send the movie wrapped in a scarf and tie on something Springy.

Valentine's Day

The ultimate in "Treats for Sweets"! Send cards and love notes; fill personalized heart shaped containers with Valentine candies; send a message out of conversation hearts; insert a new or favorite photo into a mug with removable liner and fill mug with sweet treats; those garlands that the kids have made out of hearts, lips, cupids, arrows, etc. to hang in wardroom, ready room, or mess deck.

Mardi Gras

Don't forget your adopted sailor!

Leap Year

February 29. Go ahead "Pop the Question" – tell him you'd marry him all over again!



March

The windy month – send a couple of kites to fly off the fantail in their "spare" time!

St. Patrick's Day

March 17. Fill a bucket or two with gold coins, green sugar cookies, spearmint candies and other treats. Enclose a rainbow that the kids have made. Optional rubber snakes – for laughs!! Include a CD of Irish drinking songs, complete with green drink mix (Kool-Aid, Gatorade, Margarita?!). Decorate the shipping carton with things Irish.

March Madness

Fill sports shoe boxes with basketball theme items. Include colors, mascots, sportswear from specific schools, especially if you know there's a fan or two onboard. And don't forget the snacks! Maybe send "the brackets" from newspapers along with the Sunday comics so that favorite teams can be followed. Remember your adopted sailor!



April

April Fools' Day

Just keep it tasteful!

Easter Baskets

Fill 'em up with all kinds of sweet treats. Send an Easter egg hunt consisting of plastic eggs filled with candies, nuts, etc. to be scattered on wardroom/mess deck tables. Bear in mind the overall weight of candy and its "meltability." Include those garlands the kids have worked so hard on! And don't lay an egg by forgetting your adopted sailor!

Shower Caps/Rain Bonnets

Fill with appropriate "shower" toiletries!

Daylight Savings Time Begins

1st Sunday. Good time to send another supply of batteries for that CD/tape player, Game-boy or boombox.

Baseball Season Begins

Send some peanuts and Crackerjacks with a P.S. that we really DO care when they get back!

Tax Day

A little humor helps on this awful day - send a "tax refund" of play money, some aspirin and a wacky tax form that's been "appropriately filled out."



May

Kentucky Derby Day (1st Saturday in May)

Send horse racing game (divisions pick a color and race against each other). Include mint iced tea mixes, along with those snacks.

Cinco de Mayo

Break out anything Mexican and colorful. Throw in dry, non-alcohol Margarita mix packets, chips, salsa (packed carefully), canned bean dip, etc. Pinatas can hold lots of treats!

Mother's Day

Second Sunday in May. Remember all the moms in your life!

Spouse Appreciation Day

Friday before Mother's Day — Express your appreciation with a bag of May flowers. Fill a flower decorated bag with an appreciative card, and a picture or two, along with other sweet treats. Scent some tissue paper or the card with your favorite fragrance.

Armed Forces Day

3rd Saturday. Break out the red, white and blue! It'll come in handy over the next few months! A great way to remember your adopted sailor!

Indy 500 Race/Memorial Day Weekend

Send over small Matchbox type cars for shipboard racing. Don't forget the checkered flags along with those Chex mix snacks. Maybe include a pair of fuzzy dice for the winner to enjoy along with his celebratory cold bottle of milk!



June

Flag Day

June 14. Send red/white/blue ribbon for table runners along with small, individual flags tied into patriotic colored bags filled with goodies; or simply decorate white bakery bags with flag oriented stickers and fill with edible or wearable goodies.

Father's Day

Third Sunday. Remember deployed dads with cards and letters from home. Send along a phone card to make calling home easier.

BBQ in a Box. Spice up the ship's "steel picnics" by sending inexpensive chef's aprons with rank or rating stenciled on in ketchup red or mustard yellow! Include summer picnic theme paper napkins, plates, and paper drink umbrellas to go with the cups. Send a Hawaiian shirt or wacky ball cap to your adopted sailor!

Family Vacation

Send brochures, maps, and pictures of possible family vacation spots to visit, with a note to "hurry home and join us" or "sure did miss you"!!!

Sports

Races, Playoffs, and Championships. Pro Basketball, Hockey, Little League Baseball, T-Ball, Wimbledon, golf, arena football, horseracing – Preakness and Belmont, auto races.



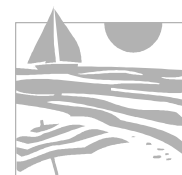
July

Independence Day

July 4th – Let your patriotism shine through with everything red, white and blue! Take empty toilet paper rolls and fill with anything small (film, stickers, stars, batteries, pens, T-shirts, candies, pictures, etc.) then wrap rolls in metallic paper, tying off both ends with curling ribbons. Voila – firecrackers. Use same ideas with paper towel tubes glued onto dowels and call them Roman Candles!!! Send patriotic theme plates and napkins, bunting, flags, CDs, phone cards – anything American!!

Beach Party!

Fill personalized sand buckets with beach goodies such as sun tan lotion, aloe gel, jelly beans in exotic drink flavors, squirt guns, T-shirts, beach music CDs, non-alcohol drink mixes (complete with paper umbrellas), and munchies. Don't leave your adopted sailor out of the festivities!



August

Dog Days of Summer

Decorate ball caps with different types of dog ears made of fabric or paper. Break out the rubber stamps and have the kids create placemats or cards featuring paw prints, dog bones, bowls, anything canine, including a picture of your own Fido.

National Aviation Day

August 19. OK aviation community, a day tailor made for you! Send prizes for the best landing, best wire, best crew, best approach, best call sign, best anything!



September

“Back to School”

Get an extra pencil box or plastic case and fill it with pencils, pens, stamps, gum, a phone card. Enclose a picture of the children’s first day of school for that year. Put some traditional school lunch favorites like Oreo cookies or Hostess cupcakes in a decorated lunch bag and personalize it with a picture from elementary school days.

Labor Day

First Monday. No need to put away the red, white and blue just yet! Put together a “lazy day” package of goodies to munch, a book or magazine to read and a new or favorite CD or tape.

NFL/College Football Begins

Start it off with appropriate team paraphernalia, Nerf footballs, the sports pages from previous weeks’ pre-season games and lots of snack treats like popcorn, peanuts and pretzels. (And who are you not going to forget to include?!)

Ombudsman Appreciation Day

September 14. Thank your Ombudsman “for being there” from “both sides” of the ocean, with a card, encouraging phone call, flowers, lunch, movie pass, gift certificate, and a bottle of aspirin!



October:

Columbus Day

Second Monday. Celebrate this discovery anniversary with your own discovery - each other! Use old world wrapping paper to fashion a bag or wrap a box which contains a few items or remembrances of the first time you met and dated. Include pictures, make a recording of “Remember when we first met...” or describe on flowery paper a couple of your first recollections of “budding romance” and slip it inside a Thinking of You card.

Navy Birthday

October 13, 1775. Celebrate over two centuries of navy tradition.

Veterans Day

Fourth Monday. Thank a Vet! Thank spouses, dads, moms, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents, neighbors, good friends, anyone who now wears or has worn the uniform proudly.

Halloween

October 31. It’s not just for kids anymore and kids will have a blast helping to put together the appropriate Trick or Treat bag full of goodies. As a treat, include a disposable camera or film and encourage picture taking. Please don’t forget your adopted sailor - that would be ghoulish!

Start asking for holiday wish list suggestions! Emphasize that parcels have to be mailed extra early to FPO addresses which leaves fewer shopping days for you, but better selections now.



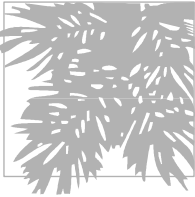
November

Marine Corps Birthday

November 10, 1775. The Navy's security force and the country's first fighting force. Wish a Marine "Happy Birthday" today and watch his reaction!

Thanksgiving

Fourth Thursday. Decorate the front of a small Lucite frame and list on pretty fall paper reasons why you feel thankful and insert in the frame. Or make a collage of everyone's reasons and insert into a larger, decorated Lucite frame to be displayed in the wardroom, ready room, or mess deck areas. Decorate small mugs with removable liners, add pictures, and fill mug with goodies. Send disposable cameras or film and encourage picture taking. (Possible mission for the adopted sailor?!) Have kids make Thanksgiving theme placemats, centerpieces, and garlands to promote picture taking!



December

Army Navy Game

GO NAVY – beat Army!!! (Don't become a goat and overlook your adopted sailor!)

Stockings

Felt, needlepoint, cross-stitch, quilted, hand knit, fuzzy fleece, velvet — lots of options! Personalize with embroidery, felt, iron-ons, cording, colored pens, velcro — just keep glitter to a minimum (ideally, none — remember how tough it is to deal with in the house, it's worse at sea). Fill with festive goodies to eat, wear or use — you know the list by now!

Christmas Tree

Create a tree out of felt and decorate with family pictures framed in felt ornaments. Attach to tree with velcro or glue. The tree can be "giant-sized" and displayed in the wardroom, ready room or mess deck, or sent to individuals to hang on doors or walls. After the holidays, it is easy to roll up and store for future use. Be sure to leave proper instructions so that all of the hard work does not go to waste.

Holiday Card

An over-sized Christmas, Chanukah, or Kwanza card can be a convenient alternative to a Christmas tree or menorah. (Save afterwards? Might become a favorite heirloom for future celebrations!)

Santa Hats

Send a Santa hat for the CO and elves hats for the rest. These scenes must be preserved in pictures!!!

Holiday Decorations

There are many holidays this time of year with various decorations. The kids may enjoy making decorations for your holiday and sharing in the excitement of making it festive.

Presents

Remember space and weight limitations as well as wish list requests. SEND EARLY!!!

Anytime Ideas

The following ideas are good to send anytime, for any reason:

Food

Cookies, brownies, munchies, nuts, candies, microwave popcorn, etc. (Tuck little messages inside.)

Send a jar of "Sunshine Pills" with a "prescription" to take daily, as needed, to brighten the day. Or count enough candies for the time deployed and make the "prescription" read to take one daily 'til home, safe and sound!

Phone Cards

Makes it easy to call home from a foreign port without needing the local currency.

Notes & Letters

Choose a different color of ink and write a letter or note on fun, pretty paper. Scent the envelope with a favorite fragrance!

Write a message or letter on a roll of adding machine tape – make it a journal of your time apart – and send it as you finish the roll, re-rolling it so that it is read from the beginning.

Make a small, personal calendar with "can't forget" dates circled or appropriately marked. Pre-buy, address, and stamp cards so that all that is needed is a quick note and a lick to send it on its way from the deployed ship.

CDs, Tapes, Movies, Computer Games, Blank Videos

Videos and pictures of families, group meetings, group outings (Busch Gardens, Easter Sunday, picnics, pool parties, first day of school, baseball games, etc., etc.).

Coupon Book

Create coupons to be cashed in sometime after returning home. Leave a couple blank to be filled in later.

Cards

Send cards for birthdays, anniversaries, thinking of you, graduation or other special occasions.

Group Photos

Have a group photo made of spouses in themed attire — Hawaiian shirts, "little black dress," Sunday best, wigs, hats, SBD jackets, etc. Get it enlarged on good stock, sign the back with an encouraging message and send early into the deployment.

Send a Monthly Newsletter

Can be sent via e-mail or print it out on fun computer stationery. Include those pictures either separate or as part of the printout.

Jigsaw Puzzles

Enlarge a group picture or family snapshot to poster size, back it with white cardboard or poster-board, sign or write messages on back then cut into a jigsaw puzzle. Once put together, the poster can be proudly displayed in the wardroom, ready room, or mess deck area.

Music

Use song titles and lines from favorite songs to say how you feel. Record a series of favorite, special songs and send along with some fresh batteries.

Tips

- **PLAN AHEAD**
The Sub community has us all beat in this department! All deployment "goodies" have to be planned, created, worked and finished, then delivered to the contact person on the boat. No reason why the rest of us can't borrow a page or two from these industrious gals and send various commands to sea with packages tagged "Do Not Open Until _____"
(dinner, midnight, breakfast, etc.).
- **DONATIONS**
Merchants, shops, restaurants and stores that you frequent are often happy to donate items for kids parties, fundraisers, auctions, etc. All you have to do is ASK!!!! Good business for them, good for you!
- **"DOLLAR" STORES**
Locate the nearest "gold mine" of a store for vast amounts of inexpensive party ideas, candy, snack foods, costume accessories, etc.
- **Remember to ship packages at least 3 – 4 weeks ahead of time to ensure on time delivery.**
- **If sending multiple packages, label them "1 of 3, 2 of 3, 3 of 3" and always include a return address.**
- **Got coins and paper money from foreign countries? Gather it up, sort it out and pack it/send it if that country is scheduled as a port visit.**

HALF WAY NIGHT AND HOMECOMING

Okay. The command has left, you've had your farewell brunch and gone home to the loneliness. Now what? Get organized! While the day to day group activities and holiday parties do need a great amount of planning, nothing means as much to the family left at home as "the big day." The one day we count down to, look forward to, and pray comes soon. No one on earth, in any branch of the military has ever had a Homecoming or Half Way Night that has gone off without a glitch, or exactly to plan. No amount of planning can prepare you for the things that pop up on "the big day." This section will give you the basic ideas, outline the simple and warn of the pitfalls. Don't rely on it as the gospel, nothing stays the same and a rule today may be different tomorrow. The most important part of this section is this:

❑ Relax. The world will not come to an end if the banner falls off the crane and into the water. The rain will not ruin your hair so badly that your mate won't recognize you. If the balloon flies away and your flowers wilt, the person in the uniform will still love you, will still be glad to see your face and will still get in the car to go home. Chances are, the guys or gals on the ship, in the plane, or on the boat, will not even see the signs, the banners, the

band or the cookies your loving hands tenderly slaved over for the past six months. Chances are he/she will only see the face behind the tears, the kids under your arm and the smile that radiates from your being. The projects are great, but general consensus says when the chips are down, they really don't matter. Remember that there is life after the big day and you, your support group, and the command will all be happier.

Before we can have a Homecoming we have other milestones to cross. Let us begin with those and work up to the big stuff.

If you wish to have a theme for the deployment, now is the time to decide. Some successful themes has included; "Follow the Yellow Brick Road", "Right Here Waiting for You", "Back in the USA", or anything that might ring true to your group, such as the time of year, a popular song or movie. If you choose a theme, stick with it and do as many projects as you can think of and incorporate them into it.

HALF WAY NIGHTS

Planning a successful Half Way night is much like planning any party. We've all done that before, right? Gather with your groups and decide with them the basics:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Cost. Unfortunately, this has become the cornerstone of any activity in which we participate because of the economic crunch we all face. If the command Moral, Welfare and Recreation cannot (or will not) subsidize the affair, this becomes a bigger concern. Try to find locations that donate rooms with a catering purchase or use on base meeting halls or cut costs. The aim is for massive participation, not a small group reveling in the festivities while the rest of the group balances their checkbooks. Only a close group can discuss this factor honestly and perhaps you, as the honorary leader, will have to broach the subject and bring it out in the open. Talk about this first, before plans are committed to and then no one can afford to attend. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Where. Good places to suggest are local hotels or clubs (for a catered affair), dinner, theaters, or restaurants (for simple, "meals only" affairs).❑ When. There is no "exact" day of half way so choose a night somewhere in the ball park and go with it. Some of your group may want it pinned down to exact, but close is good enough for government work.❑ What. That's up to you and your group. Celebrate half way night any way the group (with your guidance) sees it appropriate. Just be sure to mark it. Ideas include: <i>Fashion Shows</i>, featuring fashions for homecoming (tasteful lingerie included). <i>Dinner Theater</i>, not as much personal interaction and usually a little more expensive. <i>Seminars</i>, make up and hair styling tips. Can also be added to a fashion show. <i>Pot Lucks</i>, cozy and intimate for smaller groups. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Who. Again, it's up to your group. Some include mothers, fathers, sisters, brighter. Most include just the spouse or significant other of the deployed service member. A separate party for the children is also nice (we'll talk about that later).❑ Why. Some sort of notation needs to be made for the well being of all of us. The fact that we've made it half way relieves a lot of tension. If your group is small, have a dinner in a local restaurant, large groups should have something on a grander scale. |
|---|---|---|

HOMECOMING

Well, this is it. You've cried, laughed, and labored through deployment and now they're coming home. Personal worries are, and should be, the most important items on the agenda of the day; what to wear, how to do the hair, is the house clean, is the car clean, is the dog rabid free? The last thing anyone needs on homecoming day is to worry about signs, activities, or calming chaos. Enlist the help of fellow military spouses to do the work that a host command isn't responsible for. Children's Activities on the pier or in the hanger can be overseen by volunteers, rather than someone who's mind is on a long awaited reunion. About four to six weeks before Homecoming, you will be given the name and the point of contact for your "Host Command." Work with your Host Command to be aware of what they will assist you with. Request and receive permission for any activities planned on the pier or in the hanger so time is not wasted painting banners that can't be hung and inflating balloons that can't be released or held. Try to avoid going overboard with things for the service member to see, they really only want to see their families. Don't spend great amounts of your fund-raising money on items that may not be noticed. Concentrate your energies on the families waiting for the return instead. The first step is in planning and selection of committees. Below is a list of committee positions and their duties that should get you started.

☐ **Chairman.** Coordinates all activities, selects committee chairmen, gathers their reports, establishes a schedule of committee meetings and project drop-off dates and times. Works with the host command to assure permissions and rules are understood and carried back to the group. Usually this is a two person team (the ombudsman and CO or XO spouse). Often times this person or people forego their own private homecoming to make it special for others.

- ☐ **Fund-raising.** Coordinates the ideas to raise money, organizes the activities and solicits the volunteers to work on the projects.
- ☐ **Publicity.** Lets people know what you are doing (radio stations, TV, newspapers), ongoing projects, not only with announcements, but follow-up articles after the event. Collaborates with the historian for photos. When publicizing homecoming events, lists the local sponsors who made it possible. Check with the local PAO before releasing dates of homecoming.

☐ **Donations.** Responsible for pounding the pavement and asking for donations for raffle items, door prizes, single crewmember freebies. Also writes follow-up thank you notes.

If you had to decide on a theme earlier in the deployment, use it in your plans for homecoming. Here are a few suggestions to make homecoming successful:



HOMECOMING

Tips for Making
a Good Thing Better!



HOMECOMING DAY

- Be realistic. The perfect reunion fantasy is just that — a fantasy.
- Expect to be more tired than you think. With all the excitement and preparations, fatigue is a common homecoming reaction for everyone.
- Take time to get reacquainted with one another. Remember that intimacy involves emotional, as well as physical closeness. Talk about each other's expectations for reconnecting physically.
- Stay flexible. Emotions are intense, children are overstimulated, and schedules are unpredictable. Keeping planned activities to a minimum can help everyone avoid unnecessary stress.



TIPS FOR REUNION

- Start planning early. What kind of celebration do you want and who do you want to be a part of it? What does your partner want? Make decisions together.
- Reread letters and e-mails from your partner as a refresher on what has happened during the deployment. This can help you reconnect as you prepare for living together again.
- Talk, talk, talk! Communicating openly and honestly with your partner about your feelings, expectations, needs, and worries is a sure way to help make this homecoming the best it can be!
- If homecoming day is also a duty day, plan to make the best of it. Have dinner together!

For the Partner at Home:

- Life at sea is very structured. Your partner may want to be spontaneous, or he/she may want to relax without a lot of planned activities. Work out compromises so both of your needs are met.
- Your partner may have stories to tell about overseas ports. Realize that while port calls can be a highlight, they are a very small part of deployment. Life at sea can be difficult and challenging.
- Be patient. Your partner may be in the habit of giving orders. Reestablishing the communication patterns you had as a couple will take a little practice.
- Be careful not to get caught in the "Who Had It Worse" game.

For the Returning Partner:

- Realize that it's easy to lose track of life back home while deployed. Things may not be exactly the same as when you left. Taking time to observe the environment and routine at home can help you make a smooth transition back into family life.
- Your partner has had to take responsibility at home and may be rusty at sharing the decision-making. Be patient with each other as you renegotiate responsibilities.
- Your partner's independence has grown during the separation. Keep in mind that you are still needed, and more importantly, you are wanted back home!

As a Family:

- Include the kids in homecoming plans. Ask for their ideas on things such as activities and decorating.
- Plan time together as a family, with opportunities for the returning parent to become reacquainted with each child individually.
- Realize that kids react to change. They may misbehave more to get the deploying parent's attention. Take it easy on discipline as their acting up is often the only way they know how to deal with the stress of change.
- Share your feelings. It's natural to have mixed emotions at this time — excitement and happiness together with nervousness and insecurity. Telling your children

how you feel helps them recognize and express what they are feeling.

For the returning parent:

- Enjoy being an honored guest at home for awhile. Find out what rules and routines have changed before jumping in. Discuss concerns privately with your partner and make gradual changes together.

For the parent at home:

- Let the kids and the returning parent "warm up" to one another. After many months with adults, kids' high energy can be overwhelming. Your partner may need occasional breaks.
- Relax and enjoy yourself! Have a wonderful homecoming!

Returning to Children

Reunions are an exciting time, but they can be very confusing for kids. Families that imagine a “perfect reunion” may be disappointed if parents don’t understand the reactions children often have at the end of an extended deployment. Take a look at the suggestions below, and remember, family **teamwork** is the key to a smooth homecoming.



Toddlers: Ages 1 to 3

Reactions

- May be shy and clingy.
- May not recognize the returning parent.
- May have temper tantrums.
- May regress with toilet training.

Techniques

- Don’t force hugs or play.
- Give them time to warm up; they’ll be curious and seek out the returning parent.
- Sit or kneel at their level.
- Snuggle with your spouse — your child will soon be in the middle.

Preschoolers: Ages 3 to 5

Reactions

- May feel guilty for “making Mom or Dad go away.”
- Will recognize returning parent but may need warm-up time.
- May need “proof” that returning parent is real (poking, etc.).
- May misbehave to get attention.
- May be demanding.

Techniques

- Listen to what they tell you.
- Accept their feelings.
- Find out what new things they are interested in (books, games, TV, etc.).
- Ask them to “wait” if they are using attention-getting techniques.
- Play together (hide and seek, ball, etc.).
- Reinforce your love for your child, even when you don’t love their behavior.

School Age: Ages 5 to 12

Reactions

- May run down the pier to meet the returning parent.
- May feel guilty they weren’t “good enough” while the returning parent was away.
- May dread parent’s return, fearing they will be disciplined for all the wrongs committed during the deployment.
- May talk nonstop to bring the returning parent up to date.
- May boast about the returning parent and the military.

Techniques

- Praise them for what they’ve accomplished during the deployment.
- Spend time reviewing school work, pictures, family scrapbooks, etc.
- Try not to criticize past negative behaviors — use positive reinforcement for behaviors you are trying to encourage.
- Your child may want to “show off” the returning parent at school or to friends; agree to go if he/she asks.

Teenagers: Ages 12 to 18

Reactions

- May exhibit excitement if parent/teen relationship was strong prior to deployment.
- May feel guilty for not living up to “standards.”
- May be concerned about rules and responsibilities changing.
- May have changed physically.
- May feel “too old” to meet the returning parent at the pier.

Techniques

- Listen with undivided attention.
- Have respect for their privacy and friends.
- Encourage them to share what has happened in their personal life — be careful not to criticize.

For the Returning Parent:

Go slowly

Give yourself and your family time to readjust to your return.

Observe

Examine your family’s new schedules and routines before suggesting changes.

Be realistic

Expect that family members have grown physically, emotionally, and socially.

Be firm

Try not to give in to all of your children’s demands out of guilt.

Be flexible

Expect things to have changed — try things the new way.

Communicate

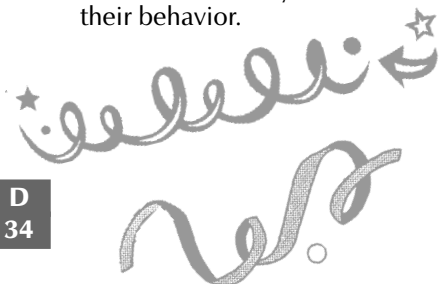
Discuss your feelings, thoughts, and concerns.

Be generous

Spend quality time with your family.

Your family will go through a readjustment period that may take four to six weeks. Keep in mind that each child is unique and will manage stress and change differently. If you have concerns about your family’s adjustment, seek professional assistance.

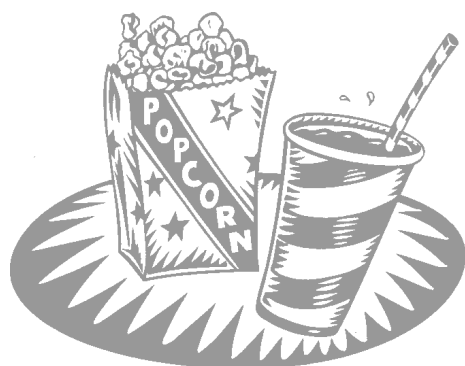
- Talk to a school guidance counselor.
- Call Fleet & Family Support Center to speak with a parent educator.



PIER OR HANGER ACTIVITIES

The wait for the ship to come around the bend (why is there always a bend?) or the plane to fly into sight can seem unending. For this reason, it is helpful to have organized activities to entertain children and adults alike. Some pier or hanger activities are arranged through volunteer organizations such as Fleet Morale, Welfare and Recreation or Armed Services YMCA. Check with them to see what they can provide for you before you make your own plans. Be sure to get permission from the host command before setting up an activity.

- ☐ Clowns. Clowns to make balloon animals, talk to kids and make everyone smile. Check with local resources for clowns before hiring one. The host command or YMCA may know someone who volunteers their time for such occasions.
- ☐ Kids Korner. Rope off a section and make grid patterns on the ground with masking tape or roll out a sheet of butcher paper and let the kids write their own message with chalk (white is best) or crayons.
- ☐ Music. Bands, DJs or tape recordings. The host command should be able to help you secure the Navy Band. If they are unavailable, check into local high school bands or hire a DJ and pre-select songs for him/her to play.
- ☐ Food and Drink. The host command should be able to furnish this for you. Important things to ask for, in addition to coffee, are no chocolate, make sugar cookies or plain glazed donuts; no bug juice, ask for apple juice or lemonade instead. Many parents have been sent off the deep end by an unsightly stain on a new outfit.



ADDITIONAL IDEAS FOR HOMECOMING

FAREWELLS

Just as a proper welcome sets a tone, a proper farewell is essential. This is your opportunity to thank an outgoing spouse for his/her input to your group.

So often in the day-to-day operations of the group, we forget to say, “Thank you for spending your time with us.” At a farewell, you have a last chance to say all the things that may have been inadvertently missed, and reiterate the praise; for never can we give enough praise.

A gift is always a challenge; something practical, yet able to be displayed to be a pleasant reminder of a place, or the people met there.

Some tips to remember when choosing gifts:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Set a budget to suit your group’s needs. (Dues are an acceptable form of financing farewell gifts.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Try to standardize gifts but offer a choice of 2 or 3 items to allow for individual tastes. | <input type="checkbox"/> Look for items indigenous to the area (Charleston rice spoon, Main Lobsters, Norfolk Mace). |
|--|--|--|

Ideas for farewell gifts might include:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Military community or command insignia pin | <input type="checkbox"/> Glass pitcher, wine carafe, or glasses with command logo cut in | <p>Additional farewell gift ideas for departing husbands include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Barbecue Tools<input type="checkbox"/> Silver or pewter stein with command logo engraved<input type="checkbox"/> Tie Tack<input type="checkbox"/> Crystal highballs or pilsners with command logo cut in. <p>It is also fun to poke gently at a funny or embarrassing experience with a gag gift in addition to the festivities.</p> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engraved Jefferson cup | <input type="checkbox"/> Engraved silver tray | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recipe Box with a recipe and photo from each spouse | <input type="checkbox"/> Vase | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engraved picture frame (picture of area or club members) | <input type="checkbox"/> Apron (preferably patch-worked with each spouse doing a patch) | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Shadow box | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Scrapbook | |

THE COMMANDING OFFICER'S SPOUSE

It is customary to present a gift to the departing spouse of the Commanding Officer. This gift needs to be of fine quality and recognize the leadership so unselfishly given during the tenure of his/her stay. The price of this gift is usually determined by the size of the wardroom group. A good rule of thumb is \$10 per person. These funds should not be taken from club treasury but should be donated as an "extra."

Gift ideas for the departing commanding officer's spouse:

- ☐ Pewter or silver punch bowl, chafing dish, tray, or goblets
- ☐ Local artist's pen and ink rendition of quarters or a landscape famous in the area; matted and framed
- ☐ Recipe book to include a recipe and a picture from each spouse. Put into a nice photo album or binding for presentation.
- ☐ Crystal wine carafe and glasses with command logo cut in
- ☐ Shadow Box with Command Star enclosed

The spouse of a retiring officer has been with the military for a very long time and should be recognized within the same category as a Commanding Officer's spouse.

**ADDITIONAL
IDEAS
.....
FOR WELCOMES
AND FAREWELLS**

THOUGHTS TO SHARE

THE NAVY SPOUSE'S PRAYER

Dear Lord, a Navy spouse we chose to be;

Our Mates's job – to keep men free.

They must sail to foreign lands;

While they are gone, hold thou our hands.

When worries seem too much to bear,

Embrace us with Thy loving care.

If days are boring, nights too long,

Keep us, Father from all wrong.

When we are weak and torn by fears,

Please, Father, dry our helpless tears.

You know indeed that we are frail,

Help us to send them cheerful mail.

And as we our lonely vigil stand,

Our prayer is this: Hold Thou our hands!!

THE ART OF MARRIAGE

A good marriage must be created. In the art of marriage the little things are the big things...

It is never being too old to hold hands.

It is remembering to say, "I love you," at least once each day.

It is never going to sleep angry.

It is having a mutual sense of values and common objectives.

It is standing together facing the world.

It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family.

It is speaking words of appreciation and demonstrating gratitude in thoughtful ways.

It is having the capacity to forgive and forget.

It is in giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow.

It is finding room for the things of the spirit.

It is a common search for the good and the beautiful.

It is not only marrying the right partner,

It is being the right partner.

Wilfred A. Peterson

FORGIVENESS... A PRAYER

"Oh, God, I was so cross to the children today! I was discouraged and tried and I took it out on them. Forgive my bad temper, my impatience and most of all, my yelling. I am ashamed as I think of it. I want to kneel down by each of their beds, wake them up and ask them to forgive me. But I can't. They wouldn't understand. I must go on living with the memory of this awful day, my unjust tirades. Hours later I can see the fear in their eyes as they scurried around, trying to appease me thinking my anger and maniacal raving was their fault."

"Oh, God, the pathetic helplessness of children! Their innocence before the awful monster - the enraged adult. How forgiving they are hugging me at bedtime, kissing me goodnight. All I can do is straighten a cover, touch a small head burrowed in a pillow and hope with all my heart that they will forgive me."

"Lord, in failing these little ones whom you have put in my keeping, I am failing you. Please let your infinite patience and goodness replenish me for tomorrow."

Anonymous (Adapted and Edited)

A SHIP IS NEVER AN “IT”

A ship is called a she because there’s always a great deal of bustle around her...Because there’s usually a gang of men around...because she has a waist and stays...because it takes a lot of paint to keep her looking good...because it’s not the initial expense that breaks you, it’s the upkeep...because it takes a good man to handle her right...because she is all decked out...because she shows her upsides, hides her bottom, and when coming into port, always heads for the buoys.

By Mel Kenaston

Reprinted from *Spl Polariscopes*, December, 1971

HOORAY FOR THE MILITARY SPOUSE

A true Military Spouse is someone who...

- ☐ Can put eight rooms of furniture into a 5-room apartment.
- ☐ Has 20 pair of drapes, and none of them fit the living room window.
- ☐ Can emerge sane from a motel room after spending two weeks, over Christmas, with four kids who all had the chicken pox.

- ☐ Can, in one week’s time, stuff a household of furniture, four kids, two dogs, a cat, three hamsters, two birds, and six suitcases into a station wagon; drive all the way across the U.S.; and still greet their mate with a smile.
- ☐ Doesn’t even blink when they go to England and find out their household goods are in Japan.
- ☐ Raises all of their children in different states, or countries.

- ☐ Pulls out their ID card when they go into Caldor.
- ☐ Finds something faintly wrong when they see the same doctor at the hospital twice in a row.
- ☐ Can actually get everything they need to feed their whole family for one week from the commissary in one trip.
- ☐ Knows where and what Thule, Greenland is – and fears it!

NAVY WIFE'S ALPHABET

By Jean Ebbert

A is for ADAPTABLE, which is supposed to be my middle name. Also for ABSENT, which my husband is A LOT, especially when the ANCHOR'S AWEIGH.

B is for BASIC, as in BASIC Allowance for Quarters, and BASIC Allowance for Substance. (See "L".)

C is for COST of living which is always going up, and for COMMISSARY, which I therefore need more than ever.

D is for DEPENDENT, which is what the Navy says I am, even though everybody knows you can't survive Navy Life unless you're extremely independent.

E is for EMPTY, which is what my wallet is at the end of EACH pay period.

F is for FABULOUS FOREIGN ports I hope he'll bring me back FABULOUS bargains FROM.

G is for GOVERNMENT and Goldbraid and "Good Grief, Charlie Brown!" Who in Washington thought that one up?!

H is for HOUSING "on the economy," which so often seems (a) too small, (b) too expensive, (c) too close to the base, (d) too far from the base, (e) all of the above.

I is for ID card which my picture looks IDIOTIC.

J is for JACK of all trades, which it would be JUST dandy if I were one.

K is for KILOMETERS and KNOTS, both of which KINDA KONFUSE me.

L is for LAVISH, which is what I wish allowances were, instead of basic. (See B.)

M is for MAIL from the ship, which is sometimes a MAYBE thing.

N is for – mmmm-r-uh- (gosh, I can't think of anything for this one.)

O is for ORDERS to OUTER Transvania and OTHER places I never heard of.

P is for PERSONAL PROPERTY lost and damaged in our last PERMANENT Change of Station, for which I will POSITIVELY be reimbursed (PERHAPS).

Q is for QUALIFIED, for which I am getting to be a practically everything.

R is for RETURN from deployment, which is really ROMANTIC.

S is for STARBOARD, which SAILORS on SHIPS SAY when they mean right.

T is for TRIPS TO THE TAILOR, when his uniform mysteriously TIGHTENS across his TUMMY.

U is for UNEXPECTED changes in the ship's schedule, which I UNDERSTAND are UNAVOIDABLE, but which I'm often UNPREPARED for and so they USUALLY make me UPSET or UPTIGHT.

V is for VOLUNTEER work, which I know is a VERY fine thing, but sometimes I get too VOUND up in it.

W is for Navy WIVES, WHO are WONDERFUL, WITTY, WISE, WARM and WINSOME. WHOEVER WOULD argue WITH this is no longer WELCOME aboard.

X is for Navy X-CHANGE, which I am very glad X-ISTS.

Y is for YARDS and YEOMAN, and Yo-ho-ho, all of which sound very nautical, don't you think?

Z is for ZULU, which is what the Navy calls the last letter of the alphabet, which I think is a ZANY thing to do.

THE DO-IT-YOURSELF GUIDE TO SIMULATE SUBMARINE LIFE AT HOME

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Surround yourself with a few people you do not like.<input type="checkbox"/> Close all windows and doors tightly. Close curtains.<input type="checkbox"/> Seal any opening to the outside world with a proper vault.<input type="checkbox"/> Unplug all radios and televisions to cut yourself off completely from news, football games, Saturday Night Live, The Muppet Show, etc.<input type="checkbox"/> Hourly monitor all operating home appliances; if not in use, log as secure.<input type="checkbox"/> If using the bathroom, do not flush toilet for the first two days to simulate smell of blowing sanitariums and venting overboard; then flush daily.<input type="checkbox"/> Wear only approved FBM coveralls, or proper Navy uniform. No hats, special t-shirts, etc.<input type="checkbox"/> Cut your hair once a week, ensuring you make it look like hell.<input type="checkbox"/> Work in 18 hour intervals to ensure your body gets confused.<input type="checkbox"/> Listen to the same cassette over and over until you can't stand it anymore; then put in one you can't listen to without acute nausea setting in. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Set alarm to go off just as you fall asleep; set alarm at loud setting or but a special alarm with various settings (e.g., "Man battle stations." "Fire!" "Flooding in the basement.")<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare food with a blindfold on to stimulate what real submarine cooks do. Take blindfold off and try to get dog to eat it. Then break out a can of tuna and/or peanut butter.<input type="checkbox"/> Cut your bed in half and enclose all but one side using the dimensions of a small casket as a reference. When not in bed, make up blankets properly so no one will see or care.<input type="checkbox"/> To enable yourself to handle anything, constantly study wiring diagrams of operating instructions for various home appliances (stove, refrigerator, can opener). For no reason at all, at specified intervals (monthly, weekly, etc.) tear one item apart, just in case it was going to break.<input type="checkbox"/> Paint everything around you gray (Navy FSN gray, no substitutes) or off-white. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> To be sure you are living in a clean, happy environment, every Friday set alarm on loud for a short, but hated drill sounds; then get up and manned only with a bucket, sponge and greeny, clean one area over and over, even if it is already spotless. Then make out a discrepancy list.<input type="checkbox"/> Once a day, after normal programming hours, plug in television and watch one (1) movie. Be careful that it is (A) at least five years old (B) made long enough prior to showing to be sure you have seen it at least once before, or (C) so bad that you have to install a seat belt in your chair to keep you there until it is over.<input type="checkbox"/> Since there is no doctor available, stockpile band-aids, aspirins, and Actifed. These are proven cure-alls. Practice, if necessary, on your dog (surgery, dentistry, death, etc.).<input type="checkbox"/> When commencing this test simulation, lock your family, friends and everything else that means anything to you, outside. Test will run for at least two (2) months, with no end in sight. |
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Without the use of the following publications, this one would not be possible. While we have highlighted as many ideas as space would allow, there are many that ended up on the cutting room floor. For this reason, we suggest that you obtain as many of the following publications as possible to add to your library.

"Marine Officers Wives Handbook." Available through the Marine Corps Institute; Director; Arlington, VA 22222-0001.

"Daddy's Days Away." Available through The Commandant of the Marine Corps (MHF); Headquarters US Marine Corps; Washington, DC 20380-0001

"Please Buy My Violets." Available in local book stores or Windswept Publishing House; Mount Desert, ME 04660. Cost is \$9.95 and includes postage.

"An Informational Guide for 2nd MAW Families." Available through Wing Family Readiness Center; Fleet and Family Support Center; MCAS Cherry Point, NC 28533

The following publications were also used but their availability was limited to the distribution at press time. We'd like to thank the authors for their work and acknowledge the use of the marials.

"Ideas for 'Doing the Charleston' with COMDESGRU 2." 1989 edition.

"Bags of Tricks." Oceana Family Service Center PCO/PXO Spouse Workshop Handbook, 1990 edition.

AFTER DEPLOYMENT, SAILORS NEED TIME TO GET BACK IN THE SWING

Other communities may mark the beginning of summer by the clematis climbing up the mailbox, but in Hampton Roads we're blessed with one of the most joyous signs of summer—the return of the battle group.

Families who haven't had their Sailors around all winter shuffle off their bulky deployment status to bask in the fact that they are at last together again. Watching this from across the street is enough to make you run out and buy a Fudgesicle or something.

At the baseball game the other night, one of our families was sporting its newly returned sailor like a two-seater convertible. As he sat on the bleachers with his wife and daughter, all the team parents learned forward to meet him.

"Feel like we know you already," one mom told him, patting his shoulder.

"Wife talks about you all the time," said her husband.

"Glad to have you back," said a third, reaching out to shake his hand.

The sailor smiled pleasantly, the way you do when you are the only new one in a group. A dozen names scattered past him like a cloud as we quizzed him about the deployment and wasn't-he-glad-to-be-home and isn't-your-boy-having-a-great-year?

Then we paused, not knowing what else to say — the way kids do when they talk to an exchange student and realize they've used up all their vocabulary words from Spanish 101. The conversation shuffled off to a question about someone he didn't know. His smile faded a little.

I watched him step down the bleachers, speak to his wife, then take a seat in a less crowded area. The parents there also nodded and smiled at him. But a few minutes later he walked to his car, brought back a lawn chair and set it up behind the third base line.

"Better view of the plate," he told his daughter.

Better view of the plate? Maybe. Or maybe we have all forgotten how hard it is for these guys to come home — no matter how much they look forward to it.

Even though this Dad had received blow-by-blow accounts of the games and bugged his wife for pictures and called his son to remind him to keep his bat up, he still missed the season. Other parents stamped their feet to keep warm at the first games. Other parents brought the juice boxes. Other parents watched his kid hit home runs.

Sometimes we wonder how these sailors do it. How can they make their legs walk out of the house and down the steps and onto a ship that will take them away for months without falling down from the grief of it?

Someone once told me that they don't let themselves think of all they are missing at home when they deploy. The family becomes like the wiry little fingers in a doll house — where they leave us, there we stay. No matter how many e-mails or phone calls or pictures they get, they are still surprised to come home to dolls that have learned to walk, use the phone, grow whiskers, change.

It's a defense mechanism that works, but one that means the sailor comes home from a deployment to spend a few weeks taking in all the changes. A few weeks realizing exactly what they missed. A few weeks feeling like a stranger in a strange land.

But they deal with that. They have to. Until baseball season ends. And the group that watched 20 games together disperses. And the sailor becomes part of new groups of parents watching summer swim teams, and autumn soccer and winter basketball.

But for now this sailor on the sidelines behind third base will have to shout, "Keep your eye on the ball!" and "Get that bat up!" and "Good hit, son, Good Hit!" And things will get back to normal — as soon as they possibly can.

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RIPKEN'S PLAN TO RETIRE HITS HOME WITH MILITARY WIVES

Cal Ripken Jr. announced his retirement from the Baltimore Orioles last week. Despite back problems in recent seasons, Ripken, 40, said that the injuries and his status as a part-time player aren't forcing him to retire.

Instead, Ripken, father of 11-year-old Rachel and 7-year-old Ryan, said he is leaving baseball after 21 seasons because "The last couple of years I've been noticing that I miss being away from home. I miss my kids' activities and it seems like the passion...I was getting into other things."

Fans and pundits did not rebut that argument. Instead they raced to praise his 3,107 career hits, his record 2,632 consecutive games, his graciousness in endlessly signing autographs. They dissected the exact moment of play they knew that Cal Ripken Jr. wasn't performing like Cal Ripken Jr. anymore.

But I have an inkling when the Iron Man mentioned that he was choosing to spend more time with his family, it caused a ripple in at least one segment of the baseball culture. I'm sure wives of baseball players everywhere $\frac{3}{4}$ especially the ones with 11-year-olds and 7-year-olds $\frac{3}{4}$ felt a cold sliver of doubt creep around the edges of their lives.

After all, when a man of honor like Ripken leaves his lucrative work in favor of his family, it makes you wonder about your own man of honor. Does he love us as much as that job?

We military families run into the same question all the time. At a reunion a few years ago, I talked to many of our friends who had left the Navy. After these guys mentioned what they were now driving and dropped hints about how much they now earned, they each looked deeply into my eyes and said, "Really, I left because of the wife and kids. I just couldn't see leaving the family so much. I was missing everything. It isn't worth it."

Not "It wasn't worth it." Or "It isn't worth it to me." Just "It isn't worth it." As if it isn't worth it to anyone. A stone grew in my chest. My inner voice whispered that these guys, these really good guys, loved their families so much that they couldn't deploy or do work ups or have duty nights ever again. *These men love their families more than Brad Loves us.*

By the time I called my mother that night, I was in tears. But my mother $\frac{3}{4}$ an Air Force wife for 26 years $\frac{3}{4}$ understands many things better than I ever will.

"Honey, when a man says he is leaving the military because of his wife and kids, that is an answer to which there is no argument," she said. "Who would dare say that a job is more important than a child? No one."

"So it's just an excuse?" I sniffled.

"No, not an excuse. But it is only part of the reason. When it comes to making decisions about work $\frac{3}{4}$ especially work that requires a lot of travel $\frac{3}{4}$ a man puts his life on a scale. On one side of the scale are the things he gets from his career $\frac{3}{4}$ his paycheck, how much he likes the actual job, how well he is doing. On the other side of the scale are the things he gets from his family."

"Yeah, like dinner? Like laundry?"

"Not so much dinner," she laughed. "And definitely not laundry. But a man who is doing well at his work and sees that his family does pretty well with his absences weighs his life in a different way than a man who is not being promoted or a man who hates his job at sea or a man whose family fall apart if he is gone only for a few days."

"He does?" "Yes, he does. The man whose family does pretty well weighs up his life and his job and finds that the two balance each other. He thinks that it's worth it $\frac{3}{4}$ even though he probably pines for his wife and kids the whole time he is at sea. The other man weighs the unfulfilling job against the family and finds that it's not worth it. And he gets out and finds another job."

"So it doesn't mean the guy who leaves the Navy loves his family more?" I said.

"No," she said firmly "It really doesn't. Don't judge your husband based on how much travel the job requires. Instead notice how he acts with all of you when he is home."

From the way he leads the rest of his life, I am somehow certain that Cal Ripken Jr. treats his wife and children in the same honorable way that he treats the rest of the people in his life. But when he says that he is leaving baseball to spend more time with his family, we have to understand that what he is really saying is that the joy of hitting the ball out of the park, the fulfillment from being the backbone of the team, the race to keep up with younger players just isn't as good as it used to be. What he gets from baseball isn't worth it anymore.

So the Iron Man leaves on his own terms, delighted that in his children and family he has something so worthy to look forward to.

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Work-ups Get Military Couples Worked Up

Nerves churn long before deploying

The rest of the world may divide Navy spouses into groups of officers and enlisted, but we spouses are actually divided along far more serious lines: those driven insane by the never-ending nature of the six month deployment and those driven insane by all the innie/outie-duty-night-never-plan-a-blessed-thing Rest of the Time.

No matter which group we belong to, however, we spouses privately agree that the part of a sea tour most likely to produce the kind of nervous habits previously revealed only in Stephen King novels is the period obliquely referred to as “work-ups.”

To the masters of the fleet, work-ups must seem like a sound idea. For four or five months before they actually have to deploy, each crew goes to sea and makes sure that the forward boiler is going to make it all the way to Gibraltar.

They get the chance to run an operation or two, a chance to sleep up to four hours at a time, a chance to drive those little boats out of the back of the amphibious ships and run into North Carolina to pick up the Marines. Neat-o!

To them, work-ups make sense. But to us at home, work-ups make about as much sense as driving the Winnebago to Wapakoneta, Ohio, and back as a test drive for next fall’s trip to the Grand Canyon. Wouldn’t a three-hour tour around the pier do just as much good?

Little do they know that while the ship is out on the deep blue sea collecting dirty oil filters and I-don’t-know-what-all, back home we spouses are starting to collect all the crazy-making reminders that the deployment is just around the corner.

Friends forget exactly what day the ship is deploying, so they ask and ask and ask again. Kids want to know how many days their seagoing parent will be home and will that be enough time to buy a dwarf hamster. Acquaintances advise that the ship won’t be gone *that* long, and the clincher, “It will all be over before you know it.”

Right.

Is it any wonder that many fingernails are in nubs and that I’ve taken to tucking a Marlboro behind my left ear?

One of my friends has a theory that we spouses make ourselves crazy when we think of a deployment as a six-month period. Instead, she claims you should think of it as Deployment year. First, you have six months of work-ups, during which they are gone or working late most of the time. Then there are the six months they’re actually deployed. That way, the days and weeks they are home are so much gravy.

She could have something there.

My own theory is that we families might be better off if the deployment swooped down on us without any warning. The Navy could draw names from a hat every month, and whichever ship was chosen would just pick up and deploy.

Sure, it would be a big shocker, but by the time you got used to the idea, the ship would be halfway home, right?

Then again, I’m pretty sure this kind of racketsy scheme is the main reason Congress has not invited me to be part of our national defense. Ah, well.

But I do have to wonder if they understand how the drawn-out nature of the work-ups is particularly well-suited to building dread in the most stalwart of souls. Work-ups are Christmas sales the day after Thanksgiving, the Senior Prom before graduation, back-to-school displays in July, that little ache you get in your throat just before you come down with the flu. Work-ups signal to all seagoing families that a change—and not a welcome change—is about to begin.

Hurry that ship home, honey. We’ve got a lot to do.

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Jacey Eckhart

Jacey Eckhart has written *The Homefront* column for the **Virginian Pilot** for the past five years. A lifelong Air Force brat and graduate of Old Dominion University, she was certain she was fully prepared to meet the challenges of Navy Life. She was wrong. Fortunately, Jacey and her husband, an amphib ship driver, have muddled through 14 years of marriage, 11 moves, five deployments, one overseas tour, and a thousand pre-ship-move-ment spats. The couple have two children, Kelsey, 11, and Sam, 7, who do not appear permanently scarred by their parents’ choice of careers. There is still time.